

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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A RED SISTER.

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CHAPTER XXVIII.

IT seemed as if all heaven and all earth had conspired together to retard Herrick's departure for America; as if every one and everything about him said with one voice: "See now, isn't one wild-goose chase enough? Why attempt another?"

He had no sooner got into the house, pulled off his boots in his den, and sent a message to his mother that he would not sit down to dinner that night, than there was put into his hand a telegram from Mr. McGowan, reiterating the question he had before asked: "When can I see you on important business?"

Herrick's reply to this: "On my return from America"—as vague and somewhat more startling than the one he had before despatched—had the effect of bringing Mr. McGowan to the Castle before breakfast was ended on the following morning.

He entered the room with a flushed face and an air of subdued excitement, which made itself felt.

"Get him out of the room as quickly as possible, Herrick," whispered Honor, "his complexion and my hair combined would send some one crying out for the fire-engines."

Herrick complied with her request, though from a different motive.

"Champneys is waiting for me. I can only give you half an hour," he said, rising from the table and leading the way to the library.

But less than half that time was enough

and to spare to convey the startling news that a will made by John Gaskell, nearly thirty years ago, had been discovered in one of the strong boxes which contained the Gaskell family documents.

"The man who drew it up is dead," said Mr. McGowan; "my father, who knew about it, is dead; the clerk, to whose charge it most probably was committed, has long since retired from the business. No doubt"—here the lawyer threw an anxious glance at Herrick—"if Mr. Gaskell ever gave it a thought he intended, when necessity arose, to render it null and void by making another will."

"Why so?" asked Herrick, a slight annoyance showing in his tone. "Any will made by my father, depend upon it, had careful thought given to it, and was not likely to be revoked afterwards."

For all response to Herrick's "Why so?" the lawyer drew the will from its envelope and read aloud to him the document which gave the whole of the vast Gaskell wealth to Lady Joan for her life, and to Herrick a certain fixed yearly income, which side by side with this vast wealth, seemed microscopic.

Herrick listened to the last word, saying nothing. Not a muscle of his face moved. He grew a little white, that was all.

The lawyer looked up, waiting for him to speak.

"Of course," he resumed, as Herrick still sat silent, "if old Mr. Gaskell had outlived your father this will would have been worthless. My partner and I conjecture that it was made to meet certain contingencies which might—but were not likely to—arise, and that, possibly, afterwards, it was treated as so much waste paper. A Court of Equity might—"

"Stop," said Herrick, speaking now for

the first time ; "let it be clearly understood that, so far as I am concerned, no litigation will arise on this matter."

His voice was perfectly steady ; his manner showed little or no disquietude.

"From my knowledge of your father's character, I feel confident that, as time went on, he must have intended adding a codicil, at the very least, to this will. It is monstrous to think of all this wealth—these responsibilities I mean—being left upon a woman's shoulders," said Mr. McGowan, who had more than once been snubbed by Lady Joan, and with whom, consequently, she was no favourite.

"I see nothing monstrous in it," said Herrick, curtly, not choosing to have either father or mother discussed by the lawyer ; "so far as I see, this will leaves me in very much the same position as I was in before my father died. I suppose all active responsibility in the management of the estate will devolve upon me ; only, instead of having to account to my father or grandfather, as heretofore, for my management of affairs, I shall have to be accountable to the trustees. Who did you say they were ?"

"One of them is dead. The other is a Mr. John Rothsay, an old friend of your father's, a man now over seventy years of age. He will have to appoint a new trustee."

Herrick looked at his watch, and rose from his chair.

"I can't give you another minute," he said. "I have to give Champneys a long morning. I have so much to arrange with him during my absence."

"Sir!" interrupted the lawyer, anxiously, "must that journey to America take place ?"

"Must !" said Herrick with a grave decision ; "ten thousand times over it must."

"It's a thousand pities ! All sorts of legal formalities must be gone through, and the appointment of a new trustee is an important matter—"

"It's no use, McGowan. The matter on which I am bent outweighs this and everything else in importance. Nay, it is of so much moment that this"—here he swept the will on one side with his hand—"counts, with me, as nothing beside it. It will be better for you to see my mother at once and acquaint her with the state of affairs. When I return I may be able to give you all my attention."

"When you return ! Can you name a date, sir ?"

"Impossible ! I go first to Tacoma, thence I may return, or may go on—well, Heaven only knows where."

And this unsatisfactory statement the lawyer was compelled to take as an answer, and departed to seek an interview with Lady Joan.

Herrick's long morning with the manager of the Wrexford mines proved to be a very long morning, indeed, for it covered the luncheon hour—represented to the two by sandwiches and sherry in the library—and extended right on to the hour of afternoon tea.

It had been a "glorious, golden autumn day"—a day one gets sometimes after a spell of bad weather ; and Herrick, looking out from the library window, saw that his mother and Lady Honor had had tea brought to them under the shadow of the young pine plantation which faced that side of the house. He had not, as yet, spoken to Lady Joan of his intended journey across the Atlantic, and it seemed to him that here, with his cousin present, was an opportunity for so doing. Before a third person, there would be less likelihood of angry speech on her part, angry retaliation on his.

Lady Honor appeared to have spent her afternoon in sketching : her easel and painting materials stood beside her. As he approached, she suddenly put down her cup and saucer and took her sketch-book on her knee.

The action irritated him more than he cared to avow.

"What ridiculous posture is she putting me in now, I wonder," he thought. And as he drew nearer, in spite of himself, his eyes wandered beyond the miniature tea-table to her sketch-book.

Argus, couchant, sat about a yard or so distant, and Argus, couchant, covered half the page of the young lady's sketch-book, complete in outline, but with face lacking.

The girl seemed to feel Herrick's gaze.

"I have just discovered an extraordinary likeness between Argus and a friend of mine. I shall add the face later on," she said.

"I have had no time to speak to you yet"—said Herrick, addressing Lady Joan a little formally, and in a tone that showed he was resolute to bring an ugly subject into full view—"of the result of my journey to London. I am sorry to say it has been altogether fruitless."

"Indeed," nothing more, was her reply.

Herrick bit his lip and resumed :

"I followed every clue that could possibly be had ; but I could get no definite tidings of Lois and her movements."

He waited for his mother to speak. She said nothing. So he turned to Honor, and said :

"Lois White is the young lady to whom I am engaged to be married."

"Indeed !" said Honor, and—was it possible ?—in that one word she reproduced Lady Joan's voice and intonation to the life.

Herrick tried to proceed unconcernedly :

"The only thing in the shape of a clue given to me was the address of a cousin of Lois's father, now in America. As the address is not very definite—distinctive, perhaps, I should say—it would be useless to send a telegram to him. So I am starting for the place myself, to-morrow."

Now Lady Joan showed unmistakeable interest.

"You—to America—to-morrow !" she exclaimed.

"Of course. There is nothing else to be done. Do you suppose I should stay here quietly and allow my future wife to drift away from me without an effort ? You don't know me if you think that !"

"Capital !" said Lady Honor under her breath.

Lady Joan looked round at her in amazement.

"I was referring to Argie's portrait," said the girl, holding up the faceless sketch to view.

Lady Joan turned to Herrick :

"Of course you will do as you think best. Mr. McGowan just now, when he brought your father's will to me, told me you were going away for a time ; but I had no idea that America was to be your destination," she said in her ordinary tone of voice.

"Your father's will !" Herrick stared at her with wonder. She spoke as calmly as if she were talking of the will of a man who had lived and died a century back. And he could recall much such a golden, hazy afternoon as this, not a fortnight ago, when his father had stood about a yard distant from the spot where they now stood, and, pointing upwards to the pines, had said : "They'll be grand trees, Joan, when Herrick's children have stepped into our shoes."

Lady Joan did not seem to notice the cloud on his face.

"Mr. McGowan had a good deal to say

to me," she went on in the same level tone as before. Then she paused a moment before adding : "But I don't see that anything in the will he read to me will materially alter my position or yours."

This was said in a kindly, conciliatory tone. Why not ? She had power in her hands now, and could afford to be conciliatory. Besides, it was a course which promised, so far as Herrick was concerned, better results than a declaration of open war.

Herrick's face showed unmistakeable anger. His voice vibrated as he answered :

"It's a matter to which I am simply incapable of giving my attention at the present moment. Beside Lois and her strange, unaccountable flight, I can think of nothing, not even my father's will."

The last words were added with sarcastic bitterness.

There fell an uncomfortable pause. Did his ears deceive him, or, did Lady Honor give a low, long whistle ?

Lady Joan turned sharply towards her.

"I was calling Argus," said the girl, coolly. Then she pushed on one side her half-finished sketch, and, as if seized by a new idea, commenced another.

Lady Joan slightly shivered, and rose from her chair.

"It gets chilly when the sun has gone. Don't stay out too long, Honor," she said, drawing her shawl around her.

The golden haze of evening sunshine, filtering through the young pine boughs, fell on a face so pale and wan that Herrick felt himself conscience-stricken for his momentary blaze of anger.

"It would be like her to speak coldly and feel deeply," he thought. "Who am I to say that she is not as broken-hearted as I am ?"

Aloud, he said, with real concern in his voice :

"Mother, you are not feeling so well, to-day, I'm certain. Pray do not overtax your strength."

"I am not likely to do that," was her reply, spoken with a double meaning lost on him.

Was it likely that anything the commonplace days might bring would be too much for strength which had stood the wear and tear of nights outside the experience of all save the souls shut out of heaven ?

Honor's society had but little attraction for Herrick, so he turned to follow his mother back to the house.

"Will you like a shawl sent out to

you?" he said, by way of a farewell politeness to his cousin.

Lady Honor's acknowledgement of the politeness was a curious one. Just six blunt, straightforward words that admitted of no double interpretation:

"Herrick, what a fool you are!"

"I beg your pardon!" was his astonished exclamation.

"Oh, don't make me say it over again! To think of you starting off to America when—"

Here she suddenly broke off and sketched away faster than ever.

"Pray say right out all you have to say, Honor. Don't let a sense of politeness stop you," he said a little sarcastically.

"No; that isn't likely. Now will you mind telling me how you think *Oedipus* solved the riddle of the Sphinx? How have all the *Oedipuses* who ever lived solved their riddles? How was the law of gravitation discovered; the mariners' compass; the steam-engine; the uses of electricity?"

Herrick stared at her. Was she a lunatic, or was it possible his ears were playing tricks with him?

Aloud he said:

"Am I supposed to answer all those questions? It's like a page out of the 'Child's Guide.' 'Who first carried an umbrella?' Who drank the first cup of tea in England?' will follow next, I suppose. Really, Honor, you've been to school since I have, and ought to know these things better than I can tell you."

Honor rose from her chair and gathered together her painting materials.

"I know one thing better than you can tell me at any rate," she said bluntly, as before; "and that is, that no riddles, from that of the Sphinx downwards, would ever have been solved if people had run away from them instead of looking them full in the face. I've been sitting alone all this afternoon with Aunt Jo, and off and on I've had a good deal of her society the last two days; and I've come to the conclusion—"

Again she broke off.

"Pray, as I said before, don't let a sense of politeness deter you from finishing your sentence," said Herrick, half-banteringly, but in his heart more eager to hear the conclusion she had arrived at than he cared to avow.

"As I said before, I'm not likely to; but it'll come better a little later on, perhaps. Meantime, I'll give you this for a

keepsake, to take to America with you, if you like."

She handed to him a leaf hastily torn from her sketch-book; and with a smile so frank and genial that it almost made her look handsome, she disappeared into the house.

Herrick stood still for a moment, looking down in amazement at the hastily-executed drawing. It was a rough, bold sketch, made with about a dozen strokes of a full brush. A dash of ochre represented a stretch of sandy desert, out of which a full brush of sepia had made to rise the gigantic form of the mysterious Sphinx. The face of the Sphinx had been added in lead-pencil, and—there could be no doubt about it—it owned to the aquiline features and austere expression of Lady Joan.

CHAPTER XXIX.

ALTHOUGH Herrick did not find time to sit down to dinner that night; although he emphatically declined Lord Southmoor's leisurely challenge to an after-dinner game of écarté; though he swept half his correspondence unanswered into his portmanteau, and knew that the other half would keep him up till the small hours of the morning, yet there was one thing which he resolved should not be pushed into a corner, not even by his hot haste to catch the out-going Atlantic steamer—that was his first visit to his father's grave.

His father's grave! He seated himself at his writing-table in the quiet little room where he and his father had got through so much real hard work together, and for a moment leaned back in his chair, pen in hand, trying to realise that those three little words had not been spoken by him under the influence of a dream, trying to realise that, in very truth, they covered an episode which would leave its scar upon him for life.

His father lying in the churchyard! It would have been far easier to believe that he had only that minute left the room, that he had but now laid down his pen as he so often had, saying: "Well, good-night, Herrick, you are thirty years younger than I am, and can stand late hours a trifle better." Why, not a fortnight ago, as they had discussed certain matters connected with a "lock-out" in the adjoining county, he had so done. There, on the writing-table, which immediately faced the one at which he sat, was the very pen he had

seen in his father's hand, and there, too, was the piece of blotting-paper, with the impress of the firm, well-remembered writing still upon it. If the door had at that moment opened, and his father had entered, and had once more seated himself in his old chair, it would have seemed the most natural thing in the world—far more natural than the thought which he was trying so hard to make real to himself, that on the morrow, before he started for Liverpool, whence he would embark for New York, he must go forth and visit "his father's grave."

Herrick once more took up his pen, and made one vigorous effort to fling himself, heart and soul, into the paper which lay spread before him on the table—a contract which a big firm of engineers had wished to conclude with the proprietors of the Wrexford mines, and over which he had promised Champneys "to run his eye."

No use! His father's very shadow seemed to fall across the blue paper with its many items written in clerk's schoolboy hand. "Item No. 1. Now what would my father have said to this?" was the thought with which he began to read that foolscap sheet, and the thought with which he laid it down. Great Heavens!—here he pushed back his chair, and began to walk impetuously up and down the room—how was he to get through his work, how, indeed, was he to get through his life without that "final word" which his father had been in the habit of speaking on every matter, great and small?

It was long past midnight, so long, indeed, that from afar there came a faint, sleepy sound of cock-crowing, and he knew that if he threw back the venetian shutters of the room, the grey of dawn would do battle with the yellow light of his lamp.

"This time to-morrow I shall have sailed," he thought, wearily trying to fence with that other haunting thought of a dead face—a dead voice. "Now what, I wonder, will come of this journey of mine? Shall I find my darling safe and sound at the other end of it? Ah"—there it was back again—"what would my father have said of my hurried departure, and my chances of success?"

And because the thought would not be shaken off—trampled under foot—quenched, Herrick set himself steadily to face it.

Now could he fancy his father standing before him, grave and thoughtful, and

saying, "Herrick, is it right, do you think, for you to cast all responsibility to the four winds, and to leave your mother at a crisis in her life, to do battle with sorrows, and unknown anxieties, while you give chase to a poor little butterfly of a girl, who ought to have stood by your side and been comfort and strength to you?"

Could he not rather hear him in a kindlier tone, and with a softer look, saying:

"God bless you, my boy, and give you success; be true and strong, and then the weak ones will learn truth and strength from you!"

But, oddly enough, there seemed to mingle with these words the tones of another voice, a trifle loud, a trifle dominant, and as unlike John Gaskell's as it could well be, saying:

"Herrick, what a fool you are!"

Here was a harsh and jarring note to mingle with those softer and sadder memories!

"A fool, am I!" he said, to himself, with more irritation than he could account for. "Is it because I am true to the woman I love, and won't acknowledge her right to throw me over, that this girl calls me a fool? Or is it—no, that can't be possible—because the young lady thinks that I'm not setting to work in the right fashion to get my darling back, that she impugns my wisdom? Yet, what in Heaven's name am I to do, where am I to go, if not to the only relative Lois has in the world! She tells me in her scrap of a note that she will be among friends who will protect her in the future. I know all the friends she has in England, poor child, and I have been to every one of them; now where else am I to go, what on earth am I to do, if not set off to this cousin of hers?"

And again and again he racked his brain to think if any other course lay open to him, any course that approved itself to common sense and reason. But rack, and strain, and weary his brain as he might, none other could he see.

His lamp began to burn low, the dun-grey of early dawn began to flow in coldly, slowly, through cracks and crevices in the shutters. It found its way over his portmanteau, lying packed and strapped on the floor, to the débris beside his writing-table—fragments of letters and envelopes—which told the tale of his hard work at that desk.

Among those fragments, his cousin's rough sketch of the Sphinx, torn in half, caught his eye.

He pushed it irritably on one side with his foot.

"It's not worth thinking about," he said, aloud. "A girl of eighteen! what can she know of men and women, of the world and its ways, that she presumes to lay down the law as to what is or is not folly?"

And yet, fight against the idea as he might, he was constrained to admit that no better illustration of his mother in her present mood could be found than that of the enigmatical, impenetrable Sphinx of classic story. Yes, enigmatical was, indeed, the only word that could be applied to her conduct at the present moment. Together with the most violent demonstrations of grief—of delirious abandonment to grief, in fact—she had exhibited the extreme of coldness and self-restraint. And Honor had noted this, evidently, with eye as keen as his own. Now what if in addition to these clashing moods Honor had seen and had taken note of other things, equally matters of fact, which he had not seen or noted, and hence had made her blunt animadversion upon his folly?

And when Herrick had reached this point in his thinking, his irritation against Honor had somehow subsided. In its stead there had come to him a feeling of bewilderment, a distrustfulness of his own senses such as a man might feel who, having been gazing fixedly at what he considers is a red rose, is suddenly convinced of his colour-blindness by one telling him that the flower he is staring at is as yellow as a buttercup.

He passed his hand wearily over his forehead; his eyes ached, his head ached.

"I must get a couple of hours' sleep," he thought. "My head isn't clear enough to think out these things. Physically, as well as mentally, I'm not quite up to the mark just at present."

But harassing thoughts are not to be scared away by the sight of a pillow, like sparrows from the wheat by an old coat and hat. His dreams from beginning to end of the two hours to which he restricted his rest were a painful réchauffé of the day's anxieties, ending with a vision of Honor, standing in front of him with Medusa's head in her hand, and saying: "Since you choose to shut your eyes and your ears, now for ever lose the use of both."

AN ENGLISH MONASTERY.

I WONDER if any of my readers have been within the walls of the Abbey of

Mount St. Bernard, near Coalville, Leicestershire. If not, let me recommend it as an interesting spot well worth a visit. Although it stands in the very heart of England, the country immediately round it is not of the level, wooded order, which is generally associated with the idea of the Midland Counties. A writer in the "Dublin Review" describes it as being "exceedingly wild and romantic, resembling Sicilian rather than English scenery. Its regular masses of granite rock, of most picturesque outlines, surround the land cultivated by the monks; and as the situation is extremely elevated, the extensive prospects which open out beyond these, from different points of view, are truly glorious to behold. The monastery is sheltered on the north side by a huge rock."

Mount St. Bernard is the only mitred Abbey in Great Britain. I will give as briefly as possible the history of the building. In the year 1833, Mr. Phillips, a Roman Catholic gentleman, living at Grace Dieu, purchased two hundred and twenty-seven acres of forest land, for the purpose of founding on it a Cistercian House in England. In 1835, this land was taken possession of by Brother Augustine—from Mellerain, in France—whose residence was a small cottage of four rooms. Here he lived a solitary life for a short time, when he was joined by five others, Brothers Luke, Xavier, Cyprian, Placid, and Simeon; the four rooms of the cottage being appropriated as follows: one as a chapel, another as a kitchen, a third as a refectory, and a fourth as a dormitory. Over this little brotherhood, Father Odillo Woolfrey was appointed Prior.

By incessant labour, some portion of the rough forest ground was cleared, and, in a brief space of time, a larger and more commodious building was erected, the chapel of which was opened for divine service on the 11th of October, 1837.

Postulants were now admitted to the noviciate, and the little band of brothers began to assume the appearance of a regular community. This community speedily enlarged until even the new building was too small. John, Earl of Shrewsbury, generously gave two thousand pounds towards the erection of a new monastery, the foundation-stone of which was laid on the twenty-seventh of June, 1843.

So much for the early history of the monastery. To-day its inmates number about fifty. The grounds, chapel, and outer

buildings are thrown open to visitors ; and in the summer time these grounds are the favourite resort of the pleasure-seekers of the neighbourhood. The monks are very genial and pleasant to all comers, and readily give any information respecting their mode of life.

It is on a day in late October, that I start to visit the Abbey. There has been a week of almost incessant rain, but the sun is this morning making an effort to shine. Getting into the train at Desford (M.R.), I ride for a few miles through a somewhat uninteresting country, there being little to relieve the monotony of the landscape, save the gorgeous autumnal colouring of the trees. Passing Bardon Hills, this morning but dimly discerned in the hazy atmosphere, I ere long alight at the town of Coalville, and leaving the station, make my way along the road, which will, I am told, lead me to my destination. Walking briskly along I soon come to a lovely lane — ankle-deep in mud, alas ! but surrounded by beauty on all sides. Tall hedges are on either hand, while the trees meet thickly overhead, their foliage brown, golden, and brilliant red. As the leaves fall thickly at my feet, I recall Longfellow's sad little poem, in which he compares the "dead leaves" to the "hopes of youth," each destined to "fall thick in the blast," and for a moment I feel sorrowful. I comfort myself, however, with the trite reflection, that after winter comes the spring, when the trees will burst into new beauty—and as for the "buried hopes,"

God is good, and gives new gladness
When the old He takes away.

There is always compensation. "Our angels go out, that our archangels may come in," says Emerson, in his beautiful essay.

Cheered by this thought, I pass over a somewhat uninteresting piece of road, leading, however, to another path of loveliness. After traversing a long, but not steep hill, I reach "The Forest Rock," an hotel much frequented in summer by visitors to the monastery. Leaving this behind me, I walk to the summit of the hill, and there pause a moment to take breath. The hazy morning, unfortunately, prevents my seeing the surrounding country with any degree of clearness ; but I discern around me rugged hills, and in the field close at hand, are jagged rocks, amid patches of dead and dying ferns. Below me lies a building, formerly used

as a Reformatory for Roman Catholic youths.

As I stand, I seem alone in the world—all is so still, and without sign of human life. There is an indescribable weirdness in the scene ; the sun has retreated behind thick, grey clouds ; the wind is rising, and the leaves whirl down in showers. As, however, I move on, and pass a small house near the foot of the hill, the spell is broken by a dog, which comes out and barks furiously, thinking, no doubt, that I am one of the suspicious characters which the monastery is said to attract into its neighbourhood by its indiscriminate charity to all comers.

Taking a sharp turn to the left, I pass the deserted reformatory. To my right I can now discern the cross which surmounts "Mount Calvary." I hear the bell of the monastery ringing, and very solemn it sounds amid this silence. Had my visit to the monks been paid in summer, I should have been one of a crowd on this road ; but to-day I am all alone. I hope the good brothers will give me a kindly reception.

As I near the Abbey, I pass some monks working in a field, and the sight of them thrills me with a strange feeling. Are they, I wonder, content with the monotonous round of their daily lives ? Have they indeed done with hopes and fears, joys and sorrows, struggles and temptations—such as continually beset us who dwell in the outer world—and found the true road to sanctity ? Since each man carries within himself his own most subtle foe, what seclusion shall deliver him from the assaults of the enemy ? I think of those lines of Rossetti's :

All others are outside myself ;
I lock my door and turn them out :
The turmoil, tumult, gad-about.
But who shall wall
Self from myself, most loathed of all ?

A few steps further on, and I am in the very precincts of the Abbey. I sit down on a low stone wall, and wait a few minutes before proceeding further. All is very quiet ; the bell has ceased ringing, and for a while nothing breaks the stillness. At last, however, I hear signs of life, and, rising, I walk slowly to the chapel door. I hesitate about entering, and stand in some perplexity until an obliging little man—not in the monastic garb—makes his appearance, and, in answer to my enquiries, tells me that by going to the main entrance and ringing the porter's

bell, I shall be able to secure a guide who will take me round.

I find the entrance, a broad porch with seats on either side. On one of these I sit, and look critically around me before ringing the bell. Round the main arched doorway runs this inscription : "Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house, O Lord." Round a smaller door at the right side are the words, "Come to me all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you." Affixed to the main door is the "poor-box," surmounted by the following "Notice": "There is no charge for showing the Abbey; but visitors are earnestly requested to contribute towards the relief of the poor, as all are relieved alike, without distinction of creed or country." As I wait I see several poor people admitted to a room at the right of the main entrance, and I guess that these are applicants for charity. One man, with his arm in a sling, comes to me and solicits alms, telling me that he has "a broken hand." The monks, he says, "have been very good" to him.

A young girl, respectably dressed, comes and rings the porter's bell, and as the monk who admits her looks at me somewhat enquiringly, I ask him if I may be permitted to look round the Abbey. "Certainly," he answers, politely; but having ushered me into the entrance hall, he turns to me with a smile, and says: "Perhaps you know that ladies are only admitted to the museum. We shall not be able to show you the refectory and the dormitory." I am, however, prepared for this announcement, and wait meekly until a second monk makes his appearance, and asking me to follow him up a flight of steps to the right, leads the way into the museum, a room set apart for the exhibition of curiosities, and the sale of small articles, which are chiefly intended as souvenirs of the place.

My guide is a stalwart, handsome man, perhaps thirty-five or forty years of age. He has a pleasant, intelligent face, and looks very unlike one's idea of an ascetic. His white teeth gleam under his black moustache as he talks to me. I like his eyes, which look straight and steadfast, and he has a good forehead. He opens a conversation at once.

"Have you ever been here before?"

"Yes; but it is some years ago," I reply. "It is rather late now for visitors, is it not?"

"Yes; the winter is beginning; we shall

see few people before Easter. We have a long, dull time before us."

"Does not the life pall upon you?" I venture, rather timidly.

"Well," he replies, frankly, "we get used to it. But I will confess to you that it is trying, terribly trying, at first. We get up at two o'clock in the morning—on Sundays and Feast days we get up at one. It seems rather hard," he goes on, with a pleasant smile, "that on those days—the best of all—we should lose an hour's sleep. We go to bed at seven, so of course we get a fair amount of rest."

"And how about your meals?" I enquire.

"Properly speaking," he answers, "in winter we should have but one meal a day; but we are now allowed a bowl of cocoa and a piece of bread in the early morning. Then dinner at half-past two. In the summer we have two meals—dinner at eleven, and supper at half-past six. After getting up at two, it seems a long time till eleven."

"And what do you eat?" I proceed.

"We are strict vegetarians. Meat is, however, allowed in case of illness. I have been here eight years, and have only tasted meat on one occasion—last summer, when I suffered from a relaxed throat. Let me see, to-day is Thursday. We shall have bread, vegetable-soup, boiled rice, a little jam—to help the rice down, you understand—and a cup of beer."

"Then you are not teetotalers?"

The Father smiles amusedly.

"Well, the beer isn't exactly double X, you know." And here the smile deepens into a real, hearty laugh.

"Have you any very young men here?" I enquire.

"We do not like to take them under twenty-one," is the reply. "When they come younger, they really cannot stand the severity of the life. Many come and leave again directly. If, however, they stay for two years, and at the expiration of that time express a wish to remain, they take vows by which they bind themselves to stay here for the remainder of their days. Should their minds afterwards change, these vows can easily be dispensed from Rome; and, on the other hand, the Abbot may, if he chooses, send them away. When, however, they have been here five years, they take 'solemn vows,' and these are regarded with great gravity. It is a matter of much difficulty to get them dispensed from Rome; and no monk, having

taken them, can be sent away by the higher authorities, save for a serious crime. Some crimes can be absolved by penance and prayer, but should the sin be of such a nature as to bring open scandal upon the Church, its perpetrator is dismissed. Of course," he goes on, after a brief pause, "a monk may at any time, so far as the law is concerned, leave the monastery. If I, for instance, chose to go, the law could not lay a finger upon me to compel me to come back; but, according to the doctrines of the Romish Church, and in the opinion of my co-religionists, I should always be regarded as a black sheep."

"And do you never go out?" I say.

"I was here eighteen months," he replies, "before I left at all; save for working in the fields—we farm, as, perhaps, you know, three hundred acres. At the end of that period, I received a pressing invitation to a funeral, and accepted it. Coming back, I stayed here three years, then left to attend another funeral. I have been twice to Nottingham for ordinations, and once to Loughborough to a dentist."

Five "outings" in eight years. Two of them to a funeral, and one to a dentist!

"And you will stay here always?" I say, wonderingly.

"For my life," he answers, solemnly, "I have taken the 'solemn vows.'"

I look at him with a curious feeling of awe. He is such a young, strong man—one, it seems to me, if I may judge from this cursory glimpse of him, who might have been distinguished among his fellows, and he has come here—to this!

"I am quite convinced of one thing," I say, slowly—"that nothing but an earnest conviction that this is his true vocation could enable a man to do it."

The words seem to fire my listener's energy.

"Oh!" he replies, with wonderful emphasis, "a man must be terribly in earnest. No half-and-half work does here. He must be earnest in his every thought. That is why so many, who have not fully counted the cost, leave at the expiration of their novitiate. But when I came, I determined to stay," and he presses his foot down firmly. "At first it is hard. We never see a newspaper. Fancy a man, who has taken a keen interest in politics, suddenly cut off from knowing what is going on. But, in a while, the desire dies, and—" here he looks out of the window with a far-off gaze—"we have peace."

"Do you have peace?" I say, earnestly. "Does this mode of life indeed bring peace?"

"It does," he answers, quietly.

If this be so, my brothers and sisters, had we not better all, with what speed we may, retire to monasteries and convents? But, alas! there are, I fear, amongst us hot, restless hearts that must struggle and fight to the end.

"Do you take any interest in the theological questions of the day?" I enquire.

"Some of the Fathers write for theological papers," is the reply. "I am myself studying theology. But, generally speaking, we take no note of the outer world, save to pray for it. Ours is the contemplative life. The lay-brothers—about half our number—do the roughest work, though every one has to take a certain share; and our time is then divided between church—a good deal of church—meditation, prayer, and reading."

"What do you read?"

"Chiefly books of a spiritual nature, though others are allowed. No novels are admitted, except perhaps a religious novel, illustrating some point of doctrine.

"Are there many other monasteries like this?" I go on.

"None in England," is the reply. "The Cistercian Order is too severe to attract many followers. Silence is our rule; we never mingle in friendly chat. Even at Christmas we do not sit in a social circle, or have pleasant singing. We are always silent."

What strangers must these men, who are always together, be to each other; unless indeed, Talleyrand's cynical aphorism be true, and speech is our disguise instead of our revealer.

Just here a bell rings, and the Father says, simply: "That is the Angelus; when we hear it we all say a prayer," and he falls on his knees and prays silently.

When he rises I take a brief view of some of the articles laid out for inspection, and then follow my guide downstairs.

"Would you like to see the poor people at their dinner?" he asks, and upon my replying in the affirmative, he takes me to a rather small, square room, in which a cheerful fire is burning, and where some men are sitting eating soup and bread out of tin basins. The room is hung round with pictures, notably of Christ and the Virgin, then heads of the Saints.

"Our neighbours complain of us," says the Father, with a smile, as we turn away.

"They say we encourage tramps; but I think those who come here must be really 'hard up,' for it is a long way out of the ordinary road, and the food we give is of the coarsest description."

"Do you have applicants every day?"

"Oh, yes. Sometimes the room is quite full."

I must now bid my friendly guide good-bye, and I am in some perplexity as to whether to hold out my hand to him. He solves the problem, however, by offering his own, and giving mine a cordial shake, at the same time expressing a hope that I may find my visit an interesting one.

Left alone, I make my way to the chapel. Entering the door, I am confronted by an oil-painting—of the Virgin, I suppose—and over it is a cross, upon which hangs the bleeding Christ. At both right and left is an altar; the one at the right bearing the figure of Mary, her head encircled by a crown, while in her arms she holds the infant Jesus; the one at the left bearing the figure of Joseph, his left-hand holding a tool of his craft, and his right a bunch of lilies.

On the extreme right of the chapel is the tomb of Ambrose Lisle March Phillip de Lisle, of Garendon Park and Grace Dieu Manor, who was, his tombstone says, "a man simple and upright, and fearing GOD." A worthy eulogy, truly. At the back of this tomb is the confessional. What secrets may have been tearfully whispered within these narrow, curtained recesses!

It must be understood that I have been speaking of the "outer" chapel only. It is separated from the inner one—where stands the High Altar, and where the incense is burning—by a rood-screen. The outer chapel is for the use of the public; but in the inner one, I believe, only the monks themselves congregate.

Whilst I sit in the chapel, a lay-brother comes and busies himself in replenishing the fire in the stove, and bringing in a good supply of coals. This stove is quite an innovation, and a relaxation of the severity of the Order; but the place is situated on low ground, and it was found that the books and other things in the chapel were becoming spoiled through damp.

Emerging once more into the outer world, I find that the day has brightened, and I next make my way to the cemetery. This is a pretty, garden-like place, planted

thickly with firs and other evergreens. Around the outer walk runs a long flower-bed; but "the melancholy days are come," and there are but few flowers left, these few looking wan and feeble. The tall sunflowers are decaying, and the stalks are gaunt and bare. It was formerly the custom to keep open a half-dug grave, in order to remind all comers of their mortality; but this practice has, I understand, been discontinued. When a monk dies, he is buried without a coffin.

Leaving the cemetery, I slowly ascend the steep hill which leads to Mount Calvary. The road is narrow, bordered by tall hedges. The path is thickly strewn with fallen leaves, and on the air is a faint, lingering sweetness. I climb the steps, the last flight enriched on either side by a luxuriant growth of ivy. On the summit of the natural rock is piled a huge heap of mighty stones, and on the top of these is an immense crucifix, which on a clear day is visible for miles.

Proceeding downward from Mount Calvary, I come to "a cleft in the rock," in which lies—safely guarded behind iron bars—a recumbent figure of the dead Christ, "In His feet and hands are wound-prints," and by Him lies the crown of thorns.

But the day is wearing rapidly to a close, and I must, though reluctantly, say good-bye to the monastery. As I wend my way homeward, my thoughts are busy among the scenes I have left behind. Impressed upon my mind is the conviction that, however mistaken the idea by which they are prompted, these monks, who have voluntarily embraced a life of hardship, and willingly renounced all the pleasures of the senses, are good men. And, who knows, may not the fragrant flowers of perpetual holy thought be very pleasing in the sight of Heaven? "My meditation of Him shall be sweet," says the singer of old; but, alas! how few of us find time for meditation nowadays. We Protestants believe in a religion of action. These men of Mount St. Bernard believe in a religion of contemplation—though let not their well-tilled farm and daily bounty to the poor be forgotten. But let all

Our differing faiths agree
In one sweet law of charity.

Only let each one of us be true and earnest in his mode of service, and then our Master—and He only—must judge between us.

CONCERNING BROTHERS.

I MUST certainly admit, as to my own brothers—I speak with authority, having seven—that courteous, gallant little fellows as they in boyhood were, they never so much as approached the pretty devotion of the fair-haired, athletic lad at present in my mind's eye, who would have forsaken the most fascinating cricket match any sunshiny holiday, if only he might take the tiny hand of his prattling, baby sister into his, and tenderly guide her tottering footstep to and fro over the short range of uninteresting pavement assigned by nervous relatives. However, as I understand, I did not, at this child's age, prattle, but rather when addressed would close my eyes, the fault doubtless lies with anybody but my brothers. To go right to the other extreme, I must pay passing tribute to this lad's father and his brother.

For many years—I had almost written generations—these two elderly business gentlemen, entertaining a genuine respect for each other, and living in the same city, have, to my certain knowledge, communicated solely through the medium of brief notes, of perhaps four or five lines, relating to some such subject as the fall in the price of sugar, or the hopeless condition of certain shares; and the letters invariably begin from either party, “Dear Bro.” Kingdoms may rise and wane, dynasties flourish and vanish, but these two elderly imperturbable gentlemen continue to drive every morning to their several offices—as it happens by different streets—and to send forth, at stated intervals, their iron epistles, always commencing “Dear Bro.”

It was my good, or bad, fortune—but I esteem it the former—to be educated at a large Parisian school, and there we were all, to a pupil, in love with somebody else's brother. On Sunday afternoon, we Protestants were relentlessly marched off to a poky little upstairs parlour, and there fastened in under lock and key, until near the hour to start for evening service. It was a common belief—shared I am certain by Madame—that the black-figured tablecloth, which had from time immemorial adorned, on Sunday, the high-legged deal table of this Protestants' parlour, was in some way connected with our religion; but alas, there was nothing so tangibly religious here, and as the

merry laughter of our comrades vaulted through the sunshine to us—over the tops of the great horse chestnuts and cedars in the garden—we sat, in our black frocks, and talked with a certain subdued animation, befitting our position as Protestants, of our brothers.

I remember there was one very plain, rather sleepy-headed little English girl, Mary Ann somebody or other, who had, however, a medical student brother, Randolph, about whom she could be dangerously eloquent. She insisted that all the nurses at the London Hospital were in love with him; as to the truth of which I cannot of course speak. But we all were.

One lovely, young South American carried about in her pocket the portrait of a brother who had been accidentally drowned some years previously. We used often to make her talk to us about him—which, curiously enough, although at the first mention of his name she wept, she was ever ready to do—in such prettily-chosen language, rendered doubly pretty by her slow, sweet, South-American drawl. I am afraid Candida contrived to make a little capital out of her brother's unhappy fate. Poor young fellow! Many a sincerely sorrowful tear we, at any rate, shed for him.

I am sorry to say my brothers were not quite so popular—let us hope because I was modest about them—though, to be sure, a fair-haired heiress was in love with one. She somewhat mystified me; she insisted so earnestly on my assuring her that he was just seventeen, an assurance I was ever ready to give, almost with tears, at the prospect of so brilliant an alliance for my brother. Alas! she married directly after leaving school—as an heiress might reasonably expect to—I don't know who; but perhaps he was just seventeen.

The prime favourite of all was the talented, wealthy, and handsome brother of a girl, who came from some town—I forgot the name of—on the Hudson. Oh, how we worshipped, with what pagan idolatry did we bow before, his photograph! His Christian name was Florenceo, his sister gravely assured us; and, indeed, we saw nothing ridiculous about it, because he was born near Florence. Once, and once only, we saw him in person: dark-complexioned, dark-eyed, magnificent, seated on a high mail-phaeton, and driving a pair of coal-black steeds on the Bois. He did not cast so much as a glance at

us; but for the rest of that day we were prostrate with excitement. I may add, for the benefit of any enquiring youthful person reading these lines, that I don't in the least know what has become of Florenceo now. I wish I did.

Some of us have known the happiness of having brothers at home on long furlough from abroad. Oh, the radiant sunny weeks immediately preceding the arrival. With what a dancing heart do we don our Sunday's bonnet, and go the rounds of visiting with the bronzed and gallant stranger. In the early summer morning—or perhaps, late in the still night—what a thrill of peace and thankfulness comes to us, as we hear once again—after long years—the old familiar footstep on the stair. The traveller, you may be sure, has not come empty handed; and, apropos of presents from abroad, something occurs to me perhaps worth recording. Visiting, the other day, a lady friend, the sister of several brothers, all settled abroad, I was admiring some very beautiful presents she had received from them, and commented on the singular fact, that these presents came all about one time. "Well, you see," she said, "it is just like this. When Peter, say, writes, announcing the arrival of a bracelet, I post his letter at once to Jim, and bid Jim send it on to Harry. Then Jim sends me, perhaps, a gold watch; and Harry, maybe—a diamond necklace—or, at any rate they are absolutely certain to present me with something." The idea seems ingenious, and should be widely circulated for the benefit of ladies similarly situated.

I was fortunate enough, one evening, not very long ago, to sit behind a brother and sister of this sort—in a cluster of seats, ranged in the garden of one of the great recent London Exhibitions, near the place where the band was playing. A portly white-haired gentleman—eavesdropping as shamelessly as myself—separated us, and they did not see me. I gathered that the girl was paying her brother a visit in his London lodging; that she had just received the present of some money from an uncle; and that, the brother having just then a short holiday, she was anxious he should spend this money of hers in running over for a few days to Paris. I do not think the girl particularly cared about the Paris scheme, but only she wanted to spend her all on the boy, and that way seemed as good as another; nor yet, I fancy, did the boy want

to go there; but, understanding his sister's motive, he would not say her nay. I cannot say what was the end of it all. There was a look in the girl's eyes that made me think she read her brother through and through, and infinitely appreciated him; but I never see a carelessly, indiff-rent brother now, without thinking of the handsome, courteously bent head—as I peeped at it, in the red sunset, behind the white curls of the old gentleman—of that gracious, beautiful boy.

Whilst chatting amicably with the young men of a household at afternoon tea-parties, or such-like merry-makings, I cannot but speculate inwardly as to what dread wiles and machinations their sisters have employed to bring them there. At least, so it was with my brothers. "Don't let the boys know beforehand," we used to whisper; and then, when the dread moment arrived, we would sinfully and transparently pretend that the people had come by chance. The same deadly gloom pervaded the masculine portion of the household on the arrival of invitations. Perhaps it was only that we were a peculiar family.

I think I might fittingly close this rambling sketch with a reminiscence of a merry-making, to which one of my brothers—the same one the heiress was in love with—did accompany me. It was a large, private ball, given by people with whom we were not on terms of much intimacy, and where I was very sure the hostess would not trouble herself to introduce partners to a pale and very juvenile little person like myself. This particular brother, however much he might grumble beforehand, was always in a wonderfully good—I had almost said sentimental—humour so soon as he got his white tie on; and when I earnestly, just now, begged him to do his best for me, he gladly acquiesced. I have heard it said that things in this life never turn out half so badly as we expect them to; but I beg to record my experience—that I have generally found them turn out considerably worse.

A more unaffected young man than this brother of mine—the heiress ought to have waited for him—could not have been found; and there was something so frank and simply happy about him as he stood gallantly beside me, praising all the arrangements to the skies, and saying what a great pity it was that I was not getting any dancing, but that somebody was sure to turn up by-and-by, I could not bear

to depress him, by even asking him to speak a little less loudly. There he stood, as overwhelmingly grateful to everybody concerned as if the whole entertainment had been given in his honour ; his only little vexations, this one about me, and that he had not himself got many names—he spoke as if they were the prizes at a lottery — down yet on his programme. By-and-by, with an additional curl to his fair moustache, and programme held well open, he said he would take another little turn, and see if he could get any more names, and with that strolled jauntily away. My eyes were, just then, riveted on a tall, very distinguished-looking young man at that moment entering—I could see, from the manner of the hostess, a very big gun indeed. It seemed to me, that she was pressing him to dance, and that he, somewhat loquaciously, begged in an undertone to be excused. At this critical moment I was astonished—not to say horrified, to see my brother beamingly approach—with the air of a man who says to himself, “All’s well that ends well,” and greet the new arrival gaily. For a moment, the hostess having moved aside, my brother spoke in undertones—glancing feelingly about him ; and I knew he was saying how awfully good and kind it was to give us this delightful entertainment. I knew that, because the other man looked so amused. Suddenly, my brother straightened himself, as if to business.

“By the way, Plantagenet Greene,” said he, in a voice whose clear tones rang all throughout this end of the ballroom, “should you very much mind dancing with my sister ?”

I remember the young man’s gasp, my own crushing sense of bitter shame and mortification, and nothing more, until, somehow or other, Plantagenet Greene and I were waltzing together.

Poor Plantagenet Greene ! After all, he and I had several happy dances together that night. He looked the picture of muscular, manly vigour ; but I heard soon afterwards that he had gone abroad and was dead. That was an eventful night. I danced with another young man—I suppose he was somebody’s brother—who made such a long, long pause before commencing, that I not unnaturally concluded him to be timid, and being very timid myself, was sorry for him ; so, by way of helping him out of his difficulty, at last hesitatingly laid my hand on his shoulder, and diffidently enquired whether

he should like to take a little turn. With what a glance—he had a single eye-glass—did that young man turn and survey me. He was not timid. After a moment’s awful silence, during which, if looks could annihilate, I should certainly have been no more, he remarked, with the most biting scorn—it seems to me now he must surely have been very young :

“So trains are in fashion, are they ? Well, I didn’t know that.”

“Oh, did you not ?” I replied, tremulously, “I wear them.”

Far was an attempt at repartee from the intention of my blushing, humiliated self ; but when I related the incident next day at home, my seven brothers roared in concert, and vowed I could not have answered better.

YACHTING IN STILL WATERS.

SECOND SERIES.*

IN FOUR PARTS. PART I.

CALSHOT CASTLE, at the entrance of Southampton Water, is passed and repassed all day long by ocean steamers, colliers, excursion steamers, and the regular Cowes boats ; but except when in obedience to a preconcerted signal, the Cowes steamer slows, and the coastguard boat comes alongside to put on board or take off a passenger for this lonely spot, it is seldom landed upon by the tourist. The Castle is, however, of much historic interest, having been built as one of the block forts by Henry the Eighth in 1541, together with the Castles of East and West Cowes, and Hurst, out of the materials of the plundered religious Abbey of Beaulieu, at the dissolution of the monasteries by King Henry, in 1539. The old weather-fretted grey tower, with deep casemated embrasures, and walls varying from eight to sixteen feet thick, has both moat and drawbridge, the former filled by the tide with unwholesome, green water, the latter leading to a covered way connecting the main tower with an ugly excrescence of late years. Calshot is now the peaceful home of the Coastguard, breezy and delightful in summer, but exposed to every wind of heaven in the drear winter time.

This sturdy old fortress, guarding the entrance to Southampton Water, and situated at the point of a long, level spit of sand, has sustained many an alarming

* See ALL THE YEAR ROUND, Vol. ii., Third Series, No. 31, August the Third, 1889.

siege, not exactly in the general sense of the term, for nowhere does it seem to be recorded that actual shot and shell has rained upon its stout walls, but sieges of a far more destructive character—onslaughts by the Goths and Vandals of the War Department, who, in the interests of the tax-payer, let us suppose, respect nothing, however time-honoured, unless useful to their own purposes. A couple of years ago, those who love the lonely, old grey fort, trembled for its very existence. Several stern officials, with tape measures and little red flags, appeared one morning in the submarine miner's launch, and, having narrowly escaped running down a few harmless Itchen ferry-boats, homeward bound, fish-laden, proceeded to cast anchor in Calshot Hole. The officers in question having been ordered to report as to the fitness of Calshot to be converted into a torpedo station, would, as a beginning, have decreed the total demolition of this time-honoured landmark. Whether the howl of anguish and indignation raised by the neighbourhood reached the deaf ears of our rulers, and thus prevented so barefaced an act of Vandalism, or whether the fact was brought home to them, that for a torpedo station to be of the slightest use at Calshot, a hostile fleet would have had to force the Needles passage or Spithead forts, both bristling with heavy guns, and could not have been afloat as far up-channel as Calshot, history does not chronicle; but, instead of any terrible weapons of war, a harmless, though hot, little corrugated-iron building, for the use of the newly-formed Calshot yacht-club, is the only innovation in this quiet spot.

Calshot has come down in the world since the time, more than one hundred years ago, when it flew the emblazoned flag of its resident Governor, Sir Harry Burrard, of Walhampton, an ancestor of the present Baronet, from whom the old family property at Lymington has for ever passed away. The white ensign and pendant of Her Majesty's navy floats over it now; but the solid, hoary beauty of those grey stones, quarried in the Isle of Purbeck by King John, in 1204, and first used by his command in the building of Beaulieu Abbey, deserves more at our hands than their demolition for a useless purpose.

When landing from a yacht, the beach in front of the Castle is clean steep shingle, easy of access, and embroidered about high water mark by luxuriant plants of

sea spinach, which when cooked is excellent. Sailors on shore are proverbially good gardeners, and their patient toil is here rewarded by flourishing potatoes, cabbages, and sea-kale, growing in tiny enclosed gardens, won from the salt sea sands. Their clean, though damp and cold quarters in the Castle, full of quaint contrivances, are shown with pardonable pride to an interested visitor. A beautiful plot of fine, short grass surrounds the three buildings, tufted here and there with delicate sea-pink. The road traversing Calshot Spit is now in excellent condition, hard, clean, and bordered with fine turf. In spring and summer, bind-weed, cockles, coronella, gorse, and wild hyacinth deck the arid path; with heather, broom, dog-roses, and bramble later on. Mounds of real sea-kale are heaped up like ant hills, with coarse shingle, above high-water mark, for nearly a mile on the sea front, nursed and cultivated by the coastguard to great excellence; but towards the Spit nothing like a tree can live in the salt sea winds, which often cover for days together, with a dense blinding foam, the whole stretch of sand. The first gnarled, wind-bent Scotch fir has rooted itself half-way, with the weird arms of a stunted storm-beaten ilex stretched appealingly towards it for shelter. They are regarded with much affection by the coastguard, who look upon the twisted limbs beaten by sea and wind, as a first advance towards vegetation and shelter. Near here, is a white stone marked with a broad arrow, denoting where the War Department, and the Lord of the Manor, Mr. Drummond of Cadland, join hands. To the right, stretches away a chain of water-meadows, won from the mud this last twenty years, by dykes and pumping. Horses and cows pick up a living upon them, and lapwing, plover, and reed bunting hover over them, as they love to do over reclaimed land; wheeling, and crying, and grieving apparently for their lost sedge nests among the wet ooze.

Looking back towards the Castle, the sheltered bight inside Southampton Water—Calshot Hole—appears indeed a quiet haven, dotted with boats, hook noses, and a few small craft. There is, or used to be, from two and a half to eight fathoms, in this much prized anchorage. When southwest winds are raging, and the sea in Cowes Roads unbearable, the knowing yachtsman will run over, and lie in peace; but, here again, the machinations of the enemy—this time, the Southampton port

authorities—have been at work, ruining the once nice holding ground in Calshot Hole, by depositing all the mud and filth dredged from Netley Shoal into its deepest spot, trusting to the scour to carry it away to sea. Seamen believe that nothing of the sort occurs, at all events with sufficient force to sweep it clean away, and that, if continued, this valuable shelter will be utterly ruined. Continuing our walk, each step now reveals some advance towards sleek fields, and cultivated land, fenced from the encroachment of the sea by great timber groins, and soon the waste lies behind, when the heaped-up stones of a destroyed cottage are passed, and a turn in the road at the gates of Eaglehurst reveals a lovely vista of green lanes, bordered with high turf banks, clothed with a small forest of adiantum and polystichum, angulare ferns, and crowned here and there with a nodding cluster of wild hyacinth. The shade and shelter are most welcome after a remarkably hot, or cold walk, as the case may be. The village of Fawley is about two miles on this lane, passing several well-to-do farms by the way. On the return journey, a sketch should be made of the Castle, from about the boundary-stone, a very picturesque point.

Starting again from Calshot by sea, bound to Hurst, the shores of the mainland of Hampshire are almost unknown, there being no piers or recognised landing places short of Lymington. Eaglehurst opens out very soon after rounding Black Jack—the chequered buoy off Calshot Spit. It is the property of Mr. Edgar Drummond, who owns all the sea face from Calshot Stone to the Dark Water, near Lepe, and far inland. Eaglehurst is a delightful, low, rambling, cottage-built house, ornamented with castellated turrets, embowered among great forest trees, and having a detached tower on the sea front, once called Lutterells Tower, and at an earlier period Lambarts Folly, from an Earl of Cavan, who built it when the century was in its infancy.

Eaglehurst is now tenanted by Mr. Cox, and except to visit the families, all this part of the coast is private property, and, lamentable to relate, cannot be landed upon. A charming, secluded winding path, under a thick forest of pines, leads from Eaglehurst to "The Cottage," a pretty, irregular building, with alcoves, lately inhabited by Lady Elizabeth Drummond. The cliff here is higher than anywhere along

this coast; year by year the fir-trees on the sea face have retreated, as the sandy rock, honey-combed and weather-worn, crumbles and falls, carrying with it the gnarled roots of many an aged stone-pine, which, loth to leave the spot where it has stood so long, clings to the side of the rocky precipice, and still flourishes at an angle of forty-five degrees, till some deluge of rain loosens its tenacious grasp, and it falls to the earth.

At Stansore Point, however, a landing may at last be found, free from keepers, gardeners, and infuriated owners. A lovely, clear, little cove inside the sturdy timber groins, which are built here to reclaim the once fast-disappearing coast-line, invites a landing, and proffers a tough post whereto you can fasten the boat's painter. At first sight, a waste of marshy or shingly ground, rushes, short turf, small, stagnant pools, thickly grown over and bound together with enormous clumps of luxuriant blackberries, studded with gorse and tall spikes of lilac foxglove, does not sound especially inviting; but when Cowes is overrun with smart people, and the rush and burthen upon quiet folk is more than can be borne, it is delightful to get underway, leaving your enemies behind lamenting, and run over to the north shore with favourable wind and tide—in ten minutes from Cowes. Then, indeed, is the desolate strand where no human being is in sight, where the stillness is only broken by the bark of a keeper's dog away in a distant wood, or the whirr of a pheasant strong on the wing, who has just stepped out into the open to cull an early blackberry, often to be found over here in mid-August. It is then a haven of refuge, where visitors come not, and fashionable people are unknown, and presents a thousand charms undreamed of by the world.

After carefully hauling up the boat—as the tide rises very quickly, and she might be afloat when wanted—a good breadth of clean, bright, coarse shingle has to be breasted; it is heaped up year by year by the prevailing south-west wind, till it has formed a strong rampart against the thundering sea, a good evidence of the extreme utility of spending money and labour upon good, strong, timber groins, for reclaiming a shore which is being yearly encroached upon and carried into the sea. Climbing up the toilsome steps of shingle, left by the receding tide in straight ridges, many curious waifs of the ocean, which

have lain here unnoticed, may be seen—now half a shattered boat, grass-green and sea-worn, perhaps swamped, and broken in two at the davits of a yacht, part of an oar, snapped in a race, a sudden blue-jacket's cap, containing under its greasy lining letters, photographs, and many articles deeply mourned by its bereaved owner.

All flotsam and jetsam flung up between high and low-water mark used to be called droits of Admiralty, and were salved by the custom-house; but this old custom has fallen into disuse, and the Lord of the Manor gets them—the cap would be a valuable acquisition! A great deal of drift-wood comes ashore, and is sometimes used for mending the groins, which, beaten as they are ceaselessly by heavy seas, are ever in need of repair. Before the groins were built, the sea at high-water springs used to wash into the basin where the best blackberries and shortest turf grows now.

After the more than doubtful purity of the sea elsewhere, the limpid water lapping the steep beach at Stansore Point is perfectly lovely, translucent as crystal, but rather treacherous. On one occasion a party of us had come over, with bathing-costumes of varied types of hideousness. Gracie, in very sketchy attire, a little uncertain as to the extent of her swimming powers, and walking gingerly down the distressingly hard stones, with many a painful exclamation, suddenly stepped into deep water, and had to be fished out like a drowned rat. Its wonderful clearness deceives the eye as to its real depth.

It must not be supposed that because the shore here is desolate, as left by wind, and rain, and summer sun, that it is otherwise than a decidedly dry and pleasant place to wander upon. The little dykes can be jumped, the few moist places skirted, till a dry turf road is gained a little inland, arched over here and there with holly, oak, and giant trails of bramble. This much can be achieved without trespassing, and what refreshment to a jaded spirit, to be able to get away and be alone and silent, to leave all artificial life, and to reach far into the quiet heart of Nature, where for ever and ever she broods over land and sea, over barren heath and furzy waste, poor and unprofitable to man though it be! What rest, to breathe in fresh, open places, where the sea wind, cool and buoyant, rushes over the heated soil, and the gulls, flapping heavily, scream a jubilant

though discordant note, seeking pastures new.

About a mile inland from Stone Point—beyond the rushy water-meadows, golden with yellow flag—the chimneys, roof, and corn-stacks of Stone Farm come into view, and through the boles of the great elm-trees there are peeps of fresh, cool, green slopes, of rolling pasture and fast-yellowing corn. Far away, dotted about at intervals, the dark-blue pine woods and fir coppices of Exbury, with the faint red of a distant cottage roof glowing through the trees.

Without trenching upon the grounds and woods of "the Cottage"—which, of course, can only be done by permission—there are two charming walks after landing at Stone Point: one to the left, along the cliff on the short down turf, where many a large mushroom lurks behind the blackberry bushes, and where "improvements" are even now daring to obtrude themselves in the shape of small belts of ornamental shrubs, past the new red house, where nice, clean, and decidedly quiet lodgings may be found, and so on to the coastguard station at Lepe; or, turning inland through a gate, a pretty lane, which soon becomes shady, leads to Stone Farm, and on to the village of Langley.

There is no better blackberrying place in late autumn than here in this lane; and in the deep, wet ditches fern of gigantic height flourishes unknown and undisturbed, while beautiful thick clumps of the black spleenwort peep out of the long grasses under the hedge. These last transplant very well into sandy soil, and make a handsome and permanent fringe to a fernery. Here, in sight of the gables of Stone Farm, the first living creature is to be seen moving about the haystacks and rick-yard, and, to one's astonishment, a boat is visible, hauled up on a green bank under the fine old elms.

In winter, the small stream that now percolates so sluggishly among thick, black ooze and water-plants, becomes a torrent, and flowing past Stone Farm and across the water-meadows, passes through an aqueduct into the sea, close to the point. It is melancholy to think how soon the quiet and privacy of this almost unknown nook of England will have become a thing of the past, never in all the world to be restored to its lonely beauty. For alas! a railway threatens to be brought down to Stone Point, from Eling, near Southampton, where a great pier for ocean steamers is projected; the water-meadows, now sacred

to the ouzel and coot, are to be the site of great docks ; the scream of the engine and whirr of the train will replace the bittern and night owl, who now only disturb the repose of night.

It is some consolation, in the midst of such desecration of one's cherished haunts, to think that, when a south-west wind blows—which it does for half the year, as can be seen by the lean of the trees all along this coast—it will be impossible for any ships to lie at the pier, and, as the water shoals very rapidly to the eastward, large vessels would continually be getting ashore when leaving the pier. Surveyors and railway projectors have unfortunately discovered that this is the nearest point to the Isle of Wight, the shores being less than two miles apart ; and, to save the miserable stomachs of a few sea-sick travellers, all this enormous expense is to be incurred.

These projected "improvements" are, however, not yet made, nor have the sparse inhabitants of the country round yet seen anything to alarm them save a few men with tapes and measuring-rods, who come down at times to prospect, and—go away again.

When bound into the Beaulieu river, a wide berth should be given to Stone Point, as it projects a considerable distance, and is uncommonly hard. At anything like high water, vessels drawing about six feet can go over all into the river ; but the channel proper is exactly opposite Lepe coastguard station, keeping the most distant land beacon open to the eastward of the nearest one. The two beacons in one take you too close to Beaulieu Spit, which is supposed to be staked, but is not. When coming from the eastward you may head straight for the landmarks, when Stone Point is on with Calshot Spit light-vessel.

The deepest water lies close in to the shore at Lepe, and then takes an elbow turn. This corner—unstaked as it too often is—is most treacherous ; two or three yachts are often to be seen ashore at the same time, lying right over on their broadsides ; while their owners, encamped on the beach, have nothing to do but to gaze forlornly at their floating homes till they right with the flowing tide. Under these circumstances, nothing but patience is of any avail. A small pair of moorings is generally to be picked up at Lepe. What a yachtsman especially dislikes is to let go his anchor on trivial occasions : it dirties everything

on the forecastle, and takes a deal of cleaning up.

Lepe is beautifully sheltered by the mud, and, except at the top of high water in bad weather, is a charming smooth place to lie at anchor in. The coastguard station—a prim, slated building, devoid of anything picturesque—is clean and well kept, as, indeed, they all are ; the blue-jacket ashore keeping up his tidy habits, and rejoicing in whitewash and blacking wherever he may be. He also develops a taste for wheeling his smart little babies in perambulators ; but that does not detract from a life of active and often laborious usefulness whenever there is occasion for it.

GERMAN IMPERIAL CEREMONIES.

HERR GUSTAV FREYTAG in his recent work, "Der Kronprinz und die Deutsche Kaiserkrone"—a work which contains a clear and valuable estimate of the character of the late Emperor Frederick—compares, when treating of the "Kaiserkrone," the ceremonies which were customary, in the Middle Ages, on the occasions of rendering feudal homage to an Emperor of Germany, with those ceremonies which are still observed at the installation of a German Emperor. And the old ceremonies were at once so picturesque, so romantic, and so full of feudal symbolism, that it may be interesting to borrow from Herr Freytag an account—freely rendered and greatly abbreviated—of the warlike and stately observances through which feudal homage to an Emperor was so quaintly expressed.

Herr Freytag selects, for the purpose of his picture, the sixteenth century : a time in which the imperial dignity of Germany—after a lengthened period of decadence—had risen again to honour, pomp, and glory. The temper of that time led men carefully to retain and to follow the use and wont of the earlier Middle Ages ; and the especial emblem of homage for their fiefs rendered by Princes, Nobles, and all Crown vassals, was a small flag fixed upon a little flagstaff.

Now comes our picture :

On the great, wide, open space, situated near the centre of some very important Imperial city, a large and high scaffold was erected ; and a flight of broad steps led up from the ground to the raised platform. It was a necessary condition that

this scaffold should be open to sun and air, and that men should be able to ride on horseback completely round it.

On the scaffold stood the throne of the Emperor and lowlier seats for the Electors. Gay-coloured carpets and hangings of cloth-of-gold decorated this high scaffold, while dressing, or attiring, rooms, for the convenience of the Emperor and of the other high dignitaries, were built up near to it.

At the hour fixed upon for the ceremony, the Emperor and the Electors, attended by a great, noble, and knightly following, came riding in pomp and state to the grand scaffold; and then the Emperor retired to his dressing-room, and put on the heavy gold Imperial mantle and the Imperial crown. Then, arrayed in all his glory, he mounted the platform and sat down—high raised, fashining—upon the throne of empire; while the Electors took lower seats, placed to the right and to the left of the Sovereign.

The insignia and regalia were then produced. Kur-Mainz bore the Book of the Evangelists upon which vassals had to swear their oaths; Saxony carried the sword; Brandenburg, the sceptre; the Elector Palatine, the apple of empire, or pomum. Then the vassals, who came to do their homage, rode up, glittering in array, glorious in number, and each bore his small flag, carried either in his hand or fastened to the head of his horse; while, in the centre of the crowd, fluttered the great Blutfahne, or blood-flag. In accordance with early Teuton custom, the Princes and Knights then galloped furiously round the scaffold, on which the splendid Kaiser sat upon his throne. When the scaffold had been thus careered round, the vassals dismounted and knelt upon the steps, while their spokesman entreated the Emperor to renew to them the tenure of their fiefs. The Emperor himself was not allowed to speak aloud; the custom being that Kur-Mainz should speak to him, and then announce that the Emperor was willing to grant to his vassals their desire. The blood-flag was carried round three times, and then the Reichsfürst himself performed his homage alone, while the loud trumpets brayed. He rode at a gallop to the foot of the steps, dismounted, and knelt upon them. Then Kur-Mainz placed the Book of the Evangelists upon the lap of the Kaiser; the Prince laid his hand upon it and took his vassal's oath. The Kaiser grasped the great symbolic sword

by the cross-hilt and held the pommel toward the vassal. If the oath-taker were a lay vassal, he kissed the pommel of the sword; but if he were an ecclesiastical or spiritual vassal, he kissed the sceptre. Then the flags of tenure—the blood-flag waving over all—were presented, and the Kaiser, as also did the vassal, touched each flag. When this had been done, the Imperial herald, Germania, threw the little flags among the crowd, and men tore them up and struggled for shreds of them.

Sometimes, difficulties arose owing to conflicting claims to one fief. Thus, in 1530, Karl the Fifth received homage from the Dukes Jörg and Barnim for Pomerania, whereupon the Elector Joachim of Brandenburg rose and claimed Pomerania for his own. He laid his hand, in addition to those of the two Dukes, upon the staff of the little flag, and loudly urged his right. When the long ceremony was over, the Kaiser—he must then have been very weary—rose from the throne and greeted solemnly the Electors, Princes, Dukes, and all other noble homage-renderers, retired to his dressing-room, laid aside the heavy crown and heavier mantle, mounted his horse, and rode homeward to his palace—or place of residence for the time being.

This little picture of the stately and picturesque ceremony connected with German feudal tenures in the Middle Ages, is at once splendid, dramatic, and significant; and has its antiquarian interest for our day.

Germany is Conservative in adherence, so far as may be possible, to old Imperial ways and customs; but no recent German coronation or homage-rendering can vie with those sumptuous, warrior, open-air shows which obtained up to the sixteenth century. They still stir the imagination and please the fancy. They are full of splendour as of meaning. They shine reflected in the sheen of cloth of gold, and in the shining of bright armour; while flags and feathers wave above a gorgeous crowd of those Electors, Princes, Knights, who acknowledged fealty to the idea of the German Imperial crown.

Germany has always seemed to be a stronghold of idealism; but the wave of realism is now spreading even over her broad plains. This declension is, naturally, reflected in her art: notably in the drama and in sculpture. Take two instances: Schiller is generally accepted as the representative of the ideal tendency in German poetry and drama; but the "Blätter für

literarische Unterhaltung" has produced a significant article, entitled, "Der arme Schiller," in which his decline in popular estimation and favour is bewailed. Another journal of repute remarks, pityingly, that Schiller still "attracts the plebs."

At the Art Exhibition at Munich, the most popularly-attractive work in sculpture was a group in marble, which represented a gigantic gorilla engaged in offering personal incivility to a plump and pretty negress. These things are allegories.

KESTELL OF GREYSTONE.

A SERIAL STORY.

BY ESMÈ STUART.

Author of "*Muriel's Marriage*," "*Joan Yellacot*," "*A Faire Damzell*," etc., etc.

CHAPTER LVI. THE TENSION OVER.

ELVA lay motionless in the darkened spare room at the Vicarage. Dr. Pink had administered a sleeping-draught, but it had not had the desired effect on her overstrained nerves. On coming to herself, she had refused to see any one, even her father, she begged only to be left alone till she must return home.

As she lay there, her mind gradually took in a truer view of her actions. She felt keenly how the world would speak of her, how she would be scorned, and how Walter would be pitied; but now she had once said "No," she was resolved that nothing would again make her say "Yes." Frightened and crushed as she was, she yet sighed from a feeling of great relief. Her heart bounded with the thought that she was free—free of that black nightmare. How could she have been so weak before, even for her father's sake?

Deep down in her heart Elva knew it was the sight of Hoel that had worked this new strength in her. She told herself that it was no such thing that he was nothing to her now, and never could be; that his conduct had been base and cowardly, inexplicable, and that now no explication could replace him in her estimation; but, all the same, it was the sight of his pleading face that had made her say "No."

As she lay there she thought, too, of her father. She had not dared see him, she feared to witness his disappointment; but she also felt sure that the next morning she would go to him and lay her cheek against his and beg for his forgiveness. He had never in all his life used a harsh

word towards her, he would not do so now, when others would be speaking of her with scorn.

Yet Elva shrank from this scorn even here in this darkened room; she was her father's daughter in that. It seemed so impossible to be called dishonourable; and yet would not the whole neighbourhood cut her for this conduct?

"Papa will protect me," she thought, raising herself up, for sleep would not come; "it was for his sake I tried to marry Walter; and surely he will tell people that. Amice, too, will be good to me—Amice, who has always chosen the better way; she would have done right at once, and would never have got herself into this difficulty. Dear George Guthrie, even he tried to warn me. How can I face them all again? It is dreadful."

As she sat up she heard steps hurrying outside her door, the tread of manly feet. How strange; she had begged to be left quiet. She looked towards the door, and listened again. It was Mr. Heaton's voice, and George Guthrie's step, and Miss Heaton was answering their remarks. Was anything the matter? She gazed round the room, and saw nothing but white drapery. Her wedding-dress had been taken off, and she was lying wrapped up in Miss Heaton's dressing-gown, which was much too small for her. Suddenly the door opened, and Miss Heaton entered. But Elva was conscious the two men remained close by.

"Elva, my dear, I am sorry to disturb you; but Herbert and Mr. Guthrie think that—"

"What?" said Elva, starting up, and getting off the bed.

"That you ought to know. It is quite against my wish, for I think a quiet time for reflection would be the best thing for you in your present excited state; but—"

"Say it at once," said Elva, beginning to tremble, she knew not why.

"Elva, come down at once," George called out. "Your father is ill. I know it is kinder to tell you. You are wanted."

"Papa!" she gasped.

"How can she come, she has no dress? Will you have one of mine?"

"Thank you; but I could not get into it. No dress, why this one will do, of course. Thank you, dear George, I shall not be a minute, wait for me, you will come too."

Utterly regardless of Miss Heaton's shocked feelings, Elva hurried into her

wedding gown, regardless of anything that might be said.

"What will people think to see you in that gown?"

"People! I have done caring for them. Papa is ill; he wants me; will he care whether I am in white or black?" She seized her long white veil and twisted it round her head.

"Elva! impossible! at least remember—I will fetch my largest cloak, and a bonnet."

But Elva never waited for Miss Heaton's return. Her strength had returned as she hurried into the passage, and met George in the hall.

"Mr. Heaton's pony-carriage is at the door," said George, even at this moment struck with the beauty of this white-robed woman, who was suddenly forced by this new anxiety to forget herself.

"Thank you. Quick, George, a cloak; here is Miss Heaton. Never mind a bonnet, I will put this hood on. Please drive quickly. Tell me, what is the matter?"

"I don't know—an attack—breathlessness."

"Oh, George, was it—that?" She meant was her wedding the cause of the illness.

"Oh, no. He was all right two hours ago. I saw him walk off briskly towards Rushbrook. The groom said something about an accident near the Pools. He was brought home."

"Accident! Impossible. Who brought him home?"

"Hoel Fenner and Jesse Vicary."

No other word was spoken till Elva reached home. The doors were open, the chill wind swept into the beautiful hall without let or hindrance. There were two dog-carts waiting a little way off; one was Dr. Pink's, the other was the one which had come back from Greystone. It was only when George Gathrie came to insist, that Elva had been disturbed, Miss Heaton not choosing to tell her before, and, indeed, not guessing the importance of the case.

Elva hurried up the steps, threw off her cloak in the hall, and, without further preparation, hurried through the first drawing-room, where she saw a few frightened servants whispering together.

They did not dare to stop her, and, besides, her appearance all in white was so startling. She looked like an angel suddenly sweeping through them—the angel of death.

She opened the door and saw confusedly

several persons; she knew some one said: "Don't go in." She shook off another hand that was laid on her arm, and walked boldly forward, tall, and beautiful, and strong in purpose.

"Papa! where is he?"

There was no help for it; they made a little way for her, and she saw—saw her father lying on the sofa just as Amice had seen him, except that his hands were now crossed over his chest, his eyes were closed, his white hair hung over his black coat, in the button-hole of which was still pinned in a bit of orange-blossom, pinned in by Elva that morning.

"Papa," she cried, and never dreaming how strange she looked in her white gown, she flung herself on her knees, and wound her arms round him and kissed him. Then drew back startled—she had kissed a cheek that was as cold as marble.

She knew this was death, though no one told her. She did not move away; on the contrary, she put her hands on the cold, motionless hands that would never again fondle her. Her heart seemed to die within her, her whole brain was filled with the idea: "Have I killed him, did he grieve so very much about it? Is this death? No, no; it cannot be."

She turned round suddenly, and gazed at the people near to her. There was Dr. Pink standing close beside her, and Jones, a little way off, was standing as if waiting for an order. The housekeeper was crying audibly, and then behind them on one side stood Hoel, and in the window seat Jesse sat crouched up, with his head buried in his hands, apparently hearing and seeing nothing of this scene.

All at once Elva's eyes fixed themselves on Hoel, and she went quickly towards him. He had expected some sign of recognition, some tone of voice to remind him of the past; but from her manner to him he might have been a mere stranger.

"They say you were with him, Mr. Fenner, when he was taken ill; tell me everything about it—it may help Dr. Pink. Why do they not do something for him?—nobody is trying to restore him. Tell me what to do!"

Hoel longed to comfort her, longed to have the right to lead her away, and speak words of love to her, but he could not; he was nothing to her, only a mere stranger, and she was interested in him only as being the man who was with her father.

It might have been far otherwise, and this "might-have-been" awed him strangely.

"We can none of us do more for him," he said, sadly, not daring to return her look, and his eyes resting on her arm saw a dull red stain on her white dress. It was where her father's head had rested.

"He has not been conscious since my arrival," added Dr. Pink, "he cannot have suffered much. I have feared something of this sort if he did not take more care. Will you break it to your mother? Believe me, Mr. Fenner and Mr. Vicary did all that men could do. They brought him home."

"Go to your mother, Elva," said George Guthrie, coming up; he feared that if she stayed she would not be able to bear the strain longer. He put his arm round her and led her away, he did what Hoel would have given all he had to do.

At the head of the stairs they met Amice. No one had told her yet that the end had come; but she seemed to know at once by the look on their faces that all was over.

"My poor Elva," said Amice, clinging to her. She could say no more, and Elva had no tears to shed.

"We must tell mamma," said Elva, "she has nothing to reproach herself with, nothing."

"Neither have you, Elva, it was the——" She saw George, and did not finish—she was going to say "the curse."

"George, will you stay here," said Elva, "you will be a help to us, and if any one else has to stay, will you ask them and take it into your own hands? We must think only of mamma, that is what he would like best. Oh, George, no one knows what he was to us. Is it true, or only a dreadful dream?"

She did not wait for the answer, and she and Amice softly entered Mrs. Kestell's room.

George Guthrie did indeed act the part of a brother. He was thunderstruck by the events of the day; but some one had to take the lead in the household, and George was that some one. He knew that Hoel Fenner and Vicary would be wanted at the inquest. Of course, Dr. Pink having attended him for some months, this would be a mere formal affair; still all this must be kept as much as possible from the poor widow and children. Even in his consternation, George Guthrie was a little amused at the presence of Hoel.

"Where is he to go? How am I to house an outlaw? and yet he can't stay here. I never was put in such a predicament

before. Elva is half married, and Hoel Fenner has come back. What on earth does it all mean? Curiosity is womanish; but I should like to know the explanation of that mysterious disappearance. Poor Mr. Kestell, he was too much cut up at Elva's second failure. However, we must all die, and he was ready for it, and his money is safe enough. All left to his wife for her life I suppose—my cousin is sure to ask sadly about the will. Death means money to her."

George smiled to himself as he went to consult Dr. Pink, and to see that all was kept quiet in the melancholy house. As to Hoel Fenner, he and Jesse Vicary walked sadly away to Greystone, promising to come back in the morning.

That evening the two were alone in the little quiet sitting-room. Hoel had learnt only to hate. He insisted on Jesse staying with him, for he was afraid of leaving him alone, so utterly miserable was he. Hoel had to learn to put his own grief away, in order to comfort the poor fellow. But he understood illness now, after his long convalescence, and he could see that, unless great care were taken of Jesse, he might really succumb to the mental anxiety he had gone through.

It was the first taste of doing something for another, the first attempt to give the cup of cold water for the sake of something higher than his own pleasure; but it was not an easy task to comfort Jesse. He would not be comforted; the horror of that sight, and of the revelation, was too powerful to be put away, even for an instant.

"Jesse, you must not look at it in this way. We have all been to blame, terribly to blame. Even now I am bewildered; I do not know how to act. But, remember, he gave you that letter. Will you not read it? He evidently much wished you to do so."

Jesse drew out the letter and the large envelope from his pocket. Then he opened the will, which was not closed. It was all written in Mr. Kestell's own handwriting, and was witnessed by two names. One was the Greystone lawyer, and the other was Jones. It had been signed and witnessed on this very morning.

Jesse handed it to Hoel.

"Tell me why he wanted me to read it," he said.

Hoel cast his eyes over it.

"He leaves a third of his property to his wife, and to his daughters after her.

The other two-thirds he leaves to you in restitution."

"And the letter. Read it to me if you please. I cannot see the writing."

Hoel opened the sheet of paper and read the letter. To them both it was as if the dying man were uttering the words. Jesse listened with bent head, his hands supporting it, his elbows resting on his knees. Every now and then he shuddered, as if a cold blast were shaking him. The history of his birth was now told to him, the mystery of his life revealed to him, and yet he listened as if it were the story of some other life not connected with himself.

I write this letter at midnight on the thirteenth of May, and I wish to declare that I am fully conscious of the importance of the facts related in it; and that, in consequence, I have drawn up a new will on this same evening, and, so far as I am able, I have in it made what restitution is possible.

I wish to spare those I love, and who love me, all the pain that this declaration would give them if I made it publicly; but if circumstances force you, Jesse Pellew, to reveal the facts, I hope the blow will be made to fall as lightly as possible on my innocent wife and children, who are quite ignorant of the events I must relate.

Before I married, I was a hard-working young man, with fair prospects, for I knew that through my exertions the old business was much improved; but when I proposed to Lord Ovenden for the hand of his daughter, Celia, he thought my means were not adequate for his daughter's position. I promised him she should never want for all solid comforts; I promised him also that I should grow rich, and that nothing could daunt me. I loved his daughter truly, passionately; it was from pure love that I married her, and not to improve my standing in the county. Besides, the Kestells were a good family; and at last I overcame the doubts of Lord Ovenden, and obtained his consent to our marriage. Nothing remained but to set about fulfilling my promise of one day becoming a rich man.

At that time among my friends I reckoned John Pellew. He was a young man whose very qualities had led him into trouble, for he was generous, wilful, and sometimes obstinate. He had been sent to India, and was doing well there, when he had to come home invalided. His

parents thought this a good opportunity to make up a match between him and a young lady of some fortune. Unfortunately, whilst staying with me, John Pellew, in his usual hasty manner, had fallen in love with a village girl of great beauty, and, before he had really faced all the consequences, he had promised to marry her. All this he, of course, kept to himself, till there was no way out of the difficulty. He utterly refused the marriage arranged for him, offended his family, and at last went back to India to make his own fortune. It was only just before sailing that he confided to me the secret of his marriage with Lucy Vicary, begging me to do what I could to befriend her; but saying he dared not allow her to take his name because of his family, who, he was sure, would never receive her. He also gave me all the ready money he had, which was, poor fellow, never very much, and also told me that he had invested four hundred pounds in a piece of land which a certain Button wished to sell, being very hard up, and which John Pellew, who was always doing something generous at the expense of his own interest, or that of his friends, agreed to buy.

This land, said he, was to be his child's inheritance. Further, he made me promise not to reveal his secret, till such a time as he should himself come home and openly acknowledge his wife.

I tried to point out to him the foolishness of his conduct; but as the deed was done, I promised to keep his secret, accepted his title-deeds, for, as I thought, a worthless bit of land, and bade him good-bye.

At this time my own affairs fully occupied my mind; still I did what I could for the poor girl, whom he had left to bear the brunt of life's hardships. Her mother was angry at her marriage, but had understood very little about it, except that marrying a gentlemanly man meant receiving very little money. The old clergyman who had married them was almost childish; and the neighbours taunted her with letting her daughter wed an adventurer who, most likely, had a wife somewhere else, as he was so mysterious.

I did my best to smooth their difficulties; made them remove from the distant forest village to a cottage on the Beacon; but as the money John Pellew left was soon spent, I lent them as much as I could, for the poor young thing drooped directly her husband was gone, and spent her time in fretting.

I was then expecting my first child, and

my sympathy was therefore called out towards John's unhappy wife, and before her twins were born, I did not let her want for anything; but I then seriously began to think of writing to John, and telling him plainly that I could not afford to keep his wife, that the land must be sold, and that I would set about finding a purchaser, though I doubted whether he would get back his four hundred pounds.

Before I had put this resolution into effect, came the news of the sudden death of John Pellew, from fever, and with his death the wretched secret seemed to be buried, except so far as I was concerned.

I was hesitating what course to pursue, when Lucy's twins were born, and she died two days after, happily confiding them to my care, as she believed what her husband had told her about their inheritance, as he called his poor little property.

It was at this time that the events happened which tempted me to the sin which has ever since hung its deadly weight round my neck. I can hardly write down exactly the chain of events, they were so mixed, and so intertwined. I always meant to do right, and always saw some loophole which would make everything straight; but I do not remember the exact moment when I felt that it was impossible for me to draw back or to begin again.

The grandmother died soon after her daughter; but, before her death, I learned that John Pellew's bit of land was valuable —nay, more, that it would make the fortune of any man who owned it. For once in his life John had fallen in luck's way, poor fellow! but only when it was too late for him to enjoy it. I had spent a good deal of money on his wife out of my own pocket, and, trying to forget the lately-acquired knowledge that the property was valuable, I said that I would become the purchaser of Pellew's bit of land. All the four hundred pounds should be spent on his children. As for the rest, had I not promised solemnly not to reveal their names till he gave me leave? I would keep that promise.

As I said before, all this was gradually reasoned out, and I always reserved to myself the right of making everything straight, till at last I recognised that that right had passed from me, and that I could but go on hiding the truth.

I always live in a dread of three things: The discovery of John Pellew's marriage.

The discovery of the real ownership of his land, and, therefore,

The loss of my own fortune.

That land seemed to be a perfect treasure-trove; the mines on it yielded enormous profits. And yet I argued that they were legally mine, for I had spent money on the wife and children before I knew the worth of the land. Then was it not perfectly in my right to sell the land and repay myself? That was all I had done. How easy it is to argue for oneself. Again I said, even if John Pellew had kept his land, he would not have had money enough to work it. It was my money that unlocked the treasure-trove; and do we not see in every-day life that the original possessor or inventor has to go to the wall?

Joe Button, the son of the man who had sold it to John Pellew, was another source of disquiet to me. He, poor fellow! had no earthly claim, and yet he never could get it out of his head that he ought to share some of the wealth I got from it.

For fear of his setting others to enquire, I pensioned him.

The rest you, John Jesse Pellew, know for yourself; I need not recapitulate. You accused me of a crime I never committed; but I was not less guilty towards you. To have contradicted you, would have been to have caused you to make further enquiries. I preferred writing this confession, and leaving you to decide in what manner you will require restitution at my hands. My last will shall be placed in your hands with this letter. May you deal mercifully with those who are infinitely dear to me, and for whose sake I have borne a long martyrdom, even as you look for mercy before an All-knowing Judge.

Remember a man's conscience is more powerful than a man's will. He may be condemned by the one, and yet be unable to face the consequence of acting under the dictates of the other. To trifle with your will is to kill it. Use this letter as you think best.

JOSIAH KESTELL,
Rushbrook House.

To J. J. PELLEW, ESQ.

Hoel folded up the letter, and, in deep silence, he put it back into the envelope.

"It was my conduct that brought him to this end," said Jesse, raising his head. "How can I ever forgive myself; what will gold do for me, Mr. Fenner? Do you see what he says about the conscience and the will? I would not accept what I fancied was

Heaven's and man's injustice towards me."

"Jesse, don't, I entreat you, accuse yourself. To go back to the root of the matter, it was my silence that urged you on. I found out John Pellew's marriage, and, putting things together, I unravelled the mystery; and yet, because of my abominable self-love, and also, I hope, my love for Miss Kestell, I dared not face the disgrace, nor bring it upon them. Mr. Kestell was, I am sure, aware of my reasons, he must have despised me. Even he could judge my conduct; I ought to have told you the truth, but I dared not. And now see how little my cowardice has availed. The consequences of sin are terribly far-reaching."

"Yes, it goes back and back, and spreads around, it wraps one round and there is no escape, there is none for me."

"That was not your doctrine before, Jesse," said Hoel, gently wondering at himself, as Saul must have wondered when he found himself among the prophets.

"Thank you," said Jesse, starting up

with a new light in his eyes, and he grasped Hoel's hand. "Mr. Fenner, you are right, that was not my doctrine when I was guiltless. Now that I have sinned, I must arise and go to my father. I have much to do. Thank you for your help. Anyhow, let me begin. Take this letter for me, I cannot bear to see it; but this is another matter." He tore the will in two, and threw it on the fire.

"Jesse, wait, what are you doing? Remember the proof of your birth, of your property."

"We can prove it in other ways, not through this hateful gold. One thing more. I think that Miss Amice Kestell knows this—do you?"

"Yes, I fear she guesses most of it."

"Then show her the letter, and tell her I resign everything but my father's name. Look! I have two strong hands, and I can keep Symee in the Colonies, if not here."

Hoel put his hand on Jesse's shoulder.

"Don't be rash, my dear fellow; remember that now you have your cousin Hoel Fenner to reckon with."

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